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SUBJ: MEDIA REACTION: IRAN'S TURMOIL

¶1. Republica, a newly launched independent English daily with an estimated 15,000 circulation ran an editorial titled "Iran's turmoil" in its June 18 edition. The editorial empathized with the Iranian people and their demand for fairness in the election.

¶2. Full text: "Iran has plunged into its worst unrest since the triumph of the Islamic Revolution in 1979. The election results in which incumbent President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad claimed a landslide victory have been contested by his main presidential challenger, Mirhossein Mousavi, and protested by tens of thousands of ordinary Iranians. The West, which generally dislikes Ahmadinejad, primarily because of its clash with the Islamic Republic's nuclear ambitions, has also questioned the election results. US President Barack Obama urged the Iranian leadership to "unclench its fist," and said "Iranian people are not convinced with the legitimacy of the election." Many other Western leaders have aired similar concerns.

¶3. The full story of exactly what happened in the Iranian election is unlikely to be known because of the control of hardliners in the establishment over the flow of information and clampdown against independent media in the wake of the massive protests. But the scale of victory claimed even in areas dominated by reform-minded, middle class Iranians who generally oppose Ahmadinejad, amply indicates that all is not right with the poll result. Ahmadinejad was declared victorious even in Mousavi's home district, where he is assumed to be very popular. Likewise, the way Ahmadinejad and the hard-line clerics have reacted to the growing protests shows that something could have gone wrong with the polls, if they were not in fact rigged.

¶4. The implications of the street protests can hardly be understated. Look at Iran's profile: It's a part of ancient civilization; its recent political history is equally interesting, with the overthrow of a popularly elected prime minister in the mid-1950s through American backing, the eventual overthrow of the America-backed Shah through a popular uprising during the Islamic Revolution and also because of the eight-year war with Iraq. Iran's strong links with Hamas in Palestine and Hezbollah in Lebanon make it an important player in regional politics. And, finally, never forget that Iran has the world's fourth largest reserves of oil. When a country with such interesting history and an

important place in regional politics goes into
turmoil, it naturally catches the world's attention.

¶5. Nepal, separated by thousands of miles and
connected only by weak diplomatic relations, may be
less interested, and even less impacted by what is
happening in Iran. But as the newest republic and a
country striving to consolidate its democratic
institutions and practices we must show sympathy
toward the Iranian people and support their demand
for fairness in elections. We also hope the protest
rallies called for tomorrow by Mousavi will remain
peaceful and wish that the clerics will refrain from
using force against peaceful protestors." End Text.

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